

Public Relations Toolbox

TERMS AND TACTICS

Press Kits are used to package media documents together. The kit provides all of the information relevant to your program in one place and typically includes a lead press release, supporting fact sheets, photos and spokesperson biographies. A press kit is generally the first communication the media will receive about a program.

A Press Release is the most widely used form of PR communication. It provides a detailed narrative of the key facts of your program, including the who, what, when, where, why and how. It also explains why the information is relevant to the public.

The timing for distributing press releases is based on the sensitivity of the information. If the event is a planned speech given by a dignitary, the press release can be sent one to two weeks in advance. If the information is proprietary, such as the announcement of a staff promotion, releases are distributed within a few hours of the announcement.

A Media Alert is used when event information is very simple. The brief, one-page format literally follows the “what, who, why, when and where” order. Media alerts are the preferred format for TV and radio stations to receive your information.

Alerts are faxed to media two or three days before an event – giving them the opportunity to add the event to their list of potential stories. As a courtesy, the alert can be refaxed the morning of the event as a reminder.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are used by both television and radio stations. They are community service messages (e.g., NBC’s “The more you know” or The Advertising Council’s “Friends don’t let friends drive drunk”) that run free of charge by the stations. PSAs are selected at the discretion of the station’s news team and public affairs director. Each station has a different policy when it comes to accepting PSAs. Call your local stations for details.

Fact Sheets provide supporting facts or statistics not included in the lead press release and serve as a quick reference to reporters, editors, executives, employees and spokespeople.

Biographies include personal or professional information about a spokesperson key to the Army story. This document is included in a press kit because it provides the reporter with information about the person he/she may be interviewing.

B-roll is background video footage including soundbites, manufacturing footage, consumer footage, etc. A b-roll package provides all of the visuals and content needed for a station to produce and edit its own story. Aside from the soundbites, there is no voice-over in a b-roll package. Stations use their on-air talent to customize the voice-over. A suggested script is included at the beginning of the b-roll package to provide background information and focus the reporter on the b-roll’s key messages.

“...a new perspective or a new piece of information...”

A Video News Release (VNR) is a prepackaged news story that includes a full voice-over. The station can run the story as is or edit to suit their needs. It provides the full story in a TV news format, saving the station the time and money of getting the information on their own.

A Radio News Release (RNR) is a prepackaged radio story including soundbites from key third parties. The radio station receives the story via satellite or phone line and can run it within their newscasts or independently.

A Matte Release is a hybrid of a press release and news story. The story is written by the Army and distributed via a third-party service, such as North American Precis Syndicate. Local newspapers can pick up the story much like a syndicated column. This is an efficient tool to reach mid to smaller-sized newspapers with a story that does not have a limited life span, such as a story about the Transformation Army.

A Satellite Media Tour (SMT) is an efficient tool when you want to quickly provide one-on-one interviews to TV stations across the country. The spokesperson is linked via satellite to news stations, which makes it possible to conduct a live interview with a Los Angeles station at 8:05 a.m. and an interview with a New York station at 8:20 a.m. on the same day. Interview slots are prebooked by pitching local stations. A b-roll may accompany the SMT to offer additional visuals

for use in preinterview teasers or during the interview itself. A video vendor coordinates the technical aspects of an SMT.

Desksides are in-person, one-on-one editorial briefings with editors (generally at newspapers and magazines). This tactic is often used to brief the media on new technologies or complex concepts where a key person can give an in-depth explanation and background. It is also an excellent way to build relationships with media.

Long-Lead Media include monthly magazines, television talk shows and specific variety programs that have a three- to four-month editorial lead time. For example, to place a winter-related story in *GQ*, you should contact them in August or September.

Short-Lead Media include daily, weekly or biweekly newspapers and news stations that have a day-to-day news program.